

COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE NAPA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW

Phase One

**Final Report
December 2006**

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LAFCO of Napa County



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NAPA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



I. INTRODUCTION

The Napa County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) is charged with protecting and restoring natural resources within a jurisdictional boundary that includes most of Napa County and a small portion of Solano County. The origins of resource conservation districts dates back to the national “Dust Bowl” crisis of the 1930s as drought and attendant soil losses destroyed millions of acres of cropland.



Napa River Watershed

On April 27, 1935, in response to the Dust Bowl, Congress established the Soil Conservation Service as part of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the purpose of conserving natural resources on agricultural lands. To deliver these services locally, state governments began adopting legislation to allow for the formation of conservation districts to provide assistance and leadership in the management of soil and water resources. In 1945, NCRCD was formed under California’s Soil Conservation District Act to provide non-regulatory soil and water conservation services to farmers and ranchers in Napa County.¹ Over the years the range of services provided by NCRCD have expanded to include soil erosion plans for non-agricultural lands and watershed management projects.

Table 1
NCRCD: Agency Profile

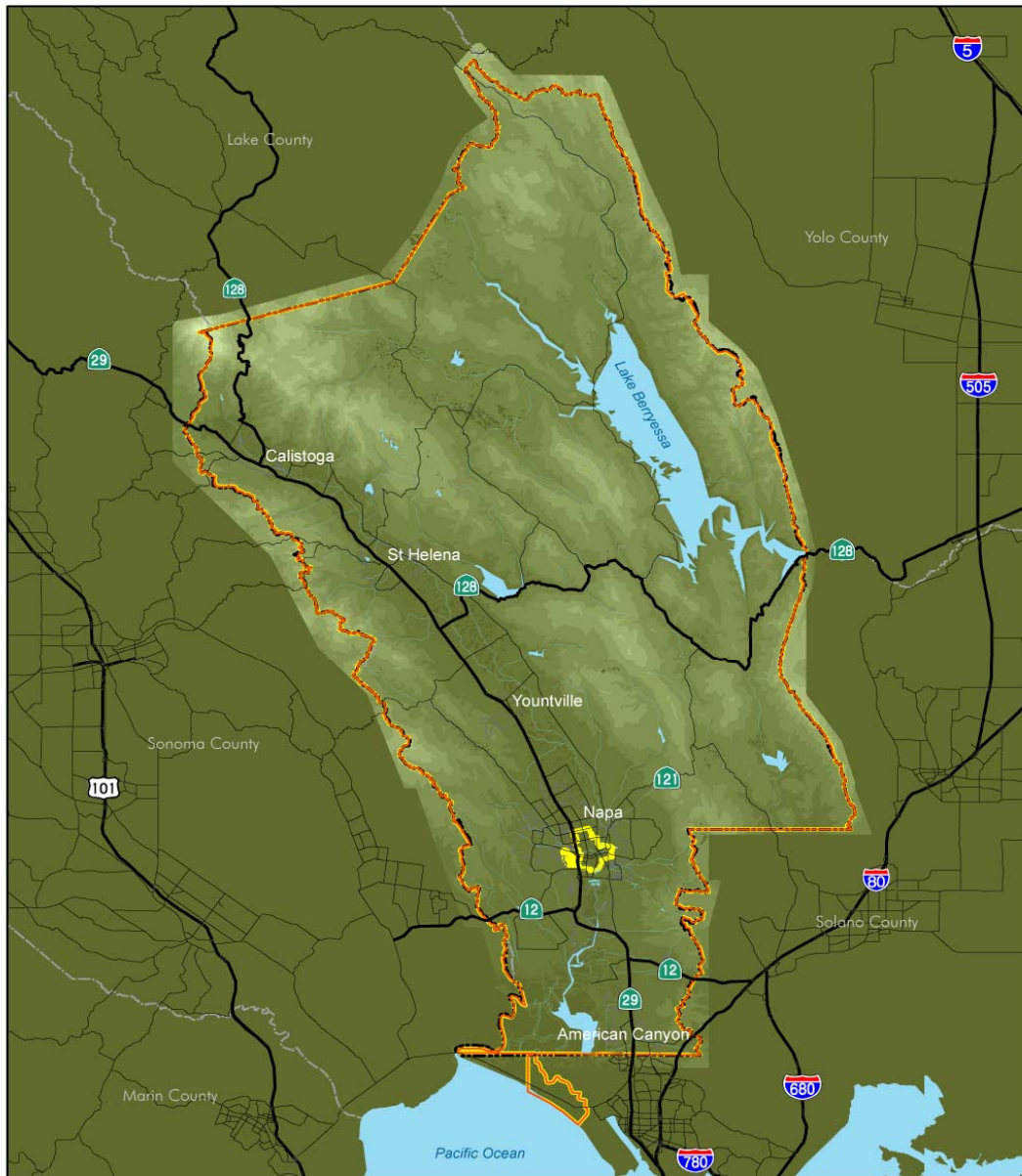
Date Formed:	1945
Enabling Legislation:	Public Resources Code, Division 9
District Type:	Dependent
District Size:	513,000 acres
Staff:	12
Adopted FY05/06 Budget:	\$1.6 million
Services Provided:	Conservation

Today, NCRCD’s jurisdictional boundary includes most of Napa County with the exception of those portions of the City of Napa that were incorporated as of 1945. NCRCD’s jurisdictional boundary also encompasses a small portion of Solano County known as “Cullinan Ranch.” This approximate 2,000-acre area was annexed to NCRCD in 1952 and is comprised of tidal wetlands providing habitat for a number of native fish, plants, and wildlife species. **Table 1** and **Figure 1** provide a summary and map of the District.

¹ This legislation was reorganized in 1975 as part of the Resource Conservation District Act.



Napa County
Resource Conservation District



Source: Napa County GIS; Adapted by Cotton/Bridges/Associates, 2005.

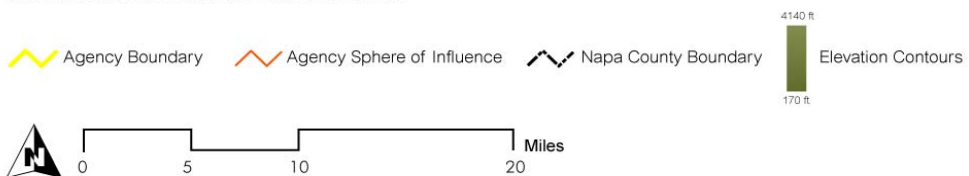


Figure 1
Napa County
Resource Conservation District



II. PLANNING CONTEXT

Napa County covers approximately 510,000 acres, of which 94% are unincorporated lands. Over two-fifths of all lands in Napa County are identified as “rural” according to a recent land use survey conducted by the County of Napa. Although it has jurisdiction throughout Napa County (except where noted in the City of Napa), NCRCD’s primary concern is the conservation, protection, and restoration of agricultural, rural, grazing, farming, parks and open space land – which constitutes the majority of land in Napa County as shown in **Table 2**.

In recent decades, Napa County has grown approximately 21 percent, increasing in population from 110,765 in 1990 to 134,100 by 2005. Accordingly to the California Department of Conservation, urban growth has resulted in the conversion of 4,758 acres of farm and grazing lands in Napa County between 1992 and 2004.² These trends are expected to continue over the next 20 years as population growth in Napa County is projected to increase 0.6 percent annually according to the Association of Bay Area Governments.

According to the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts,³ the primary focus in the next five years will be building the capacity of a local delivery system of conservation services that protects and restores natural resources in a manner that recognizes the rights of landowners. Critical local resource issues include soil and water conservation, air quality, and the presence of threatened and endangered species and non-native plants.

Table 2
Unincorporated Land Use

Land Use Category	Total Acres	% of Total Acres in Napa County
Commercial	2,932	0.6
Industrial	2,358	0.5
Public	1,593	0.3
Parks and Open Space	139,821	27.5
Urban/Suburban Residential	4,270	0.8
Rural Residential	10,684	2.1
Rural Lands	221,534	43.7
Agriculture	50,573	9.8
Grazing	48,776	9.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>481,624</i>	<i>94.9</i>

Source: County of Napa Conservation, Development, and Planning Department (September 2006)

Table 3
ABAG Population Growth Projections, 2005-2025

Jurisdiction	2005	2015	2025
American Canyon	14,200	18,300	19,700
Callistoga	5,200	5,300	5,300
Napa	80,300	85,700	89,800
St. Helena	6,100	6,200	6,300
Yountville	3,400	3,500	3,600
Unincorporated	24,900	25,800	26,400
Total	134,100	144,800	151,100

Source: ABAG, 2005 Projections

² This includes lands classified by the California Department of Conservation as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, unique farmland, and farmland of local importance.

³ CARCD Strategic Plan, 2003



Napa County, like many other regions in California, is subject to significant residential and commercial development to accommodate demands of a growing population. Although local policies have slowed the premature encroachment of urban uses onto open space and agricultural lands, the gradual expansion of urban boundaries and intensification of development underscores the need for the NCRCD to contend with population growth and urban encroachment in a conscientious method that addresses watershed conservation and agricultural needs.

III. DISTRICT OPERATIONS

Mission

NCRCD is a non-regulatory agency whose mission is to promote responsible watershed management through voluntary community stewardship and technical assistance. Stated goals of NCRCD are:

- Promotion of watershed based land stewardship, including sustainable agriculture
- Protection and enhancement of waterways and water quality
- Reduction of soil erosion
- Preservation and restoration of wildlife habitat
- Fostering of an informed and knowledgeable community

Service Powers

Pursuant to Division 9 of the State of California Public Resources Code, NCRCD is authorized to control runoff, prevent and control soil erosion, develop and distribute water, improve land capabilities, and coordinate resource management efforts for watershed restoration and enhancement.

Governance and Staffing

The NCRCD is governed by seven board members and seven associate board members. Board members serve voluntarily and are appointed by the Napa County Board of Supervisors. The Board appoints a District Manager that is responsible for managing services and overseeing staff. Staff for NCRCD currently comprises:

- District Manager
- District Administrator
- Senior Hydrologist
- Hydrologist
- Soil Conservationists (2)
- Restoration Program Managers (2)



- Education Coordinator
- Development Coordinator
- Field Technician
- Bookkeeper

Services and Programs

NCRCDD provides services in conjunction with the USDA's local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office. This includes sharing an office space, equipment, and staff resources. The two agencies work together in their outreach efforts to introduce emerging conservation technologies to landowners and community leaders in Napa County. These agencies also work together in providing leadership in facilitating community and land management forums to encourage the formulation of effective and practical conservational policies and practices.

The services that NCRCDD provides to landowners include erosion control plans and information regarding resources and regulations, watershed management, and other relevant data. Technical services for government agencies cover surface and ground water monitoring, soils analysis, and habitat assessments. NCRCDD also works with local schools and community organizations to educate students and the public about natural resource functions and conservation practices.

Cooperative Efforts

The NCRCDD participates in a number of cooperative efforts with public, private, and volunteer organizations with respect to protecting and restoring natural resources in Napa County. The organizations NCRCDD regularly works with include:

- County of Napa*
- Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
- California Department of Fish and Game
- California State Coastal Conservancy
- California State Regional Water Quality Control Boards
- California Department of Conservation
- United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Napa County Farm Bureau
- Land Trust of Napa County
- Watershed Information Center and Conservancy Board of Napa County

* Since 1991, the NCRCDD has had a contractual agreement with the County of Napa to perform technical reviews of agricultural erosion control plans and to make recommendations to its Planning Department as to their technical adequacy. NCRCDD



also provides the County with watershed education materials, trainings, and workshops, and conducts specific watershed assessment and monitoring studies.

Financial Statements

NCRCDD had revenues of \$1.5 million and expenses of \$1.5 million for a total operating income of \$0 during FY04-05. The District receives 86% of its revenue from federal, State, and local grants and contracts. The remaining portion of NCRCDD's revenue is drawn from its proportional share of property tax assessments. Approximately 80% of NCRCDD's expenditures are dedicated to salaries and subcontractor expenses. The remaining 20% of NCRCDD's expenses are for equipment and supplies.

As of 2005, NCRCDD had \$1,112,921 in total assets and \$224,269 in total liabilities. NCRCDD had \$711,075 in current assets including cash, accounts receivable and short term investments. Long-term assets total \$406,302 (\$350,000 is land, which is not depreciable), of which \$401,846 is net of depreciation. NCRCDD has sufficient current assets to meet current liabilities with a ratio of 5.8:1. Long-term debt is in the form of a note payable and compensated absences. The note payable consists of a loan agreement with the State Revolving Fund Loan Program, dated May 23, 1997 and is due in annual installments of \$9,248 on July 23 at a 2.8% interest rate. Loan proceeds were used for District improvements, which include the purchase of a demonstration vineyard and equipment. NCRCDD's current reserve balance is \$93,160.

Table 4
Balance Sheet
ending June 30, 2005

Assets	Amount
Current Assets	\$711,075
Land	\$350,100
Other capital assets, net of depreciation	\$51,746
Total Assets	\$1,112,921
Current Liabilities	\$121,535
Non-Current Liabilities	\$102,734
Total Liabilities	\$224,269
Invested in Capital Assets, net of related debt	\$308,687
Unrestricted equity	\$579,965
Total Net Assets	\$888,652

Source: NRCDD Audited Financial Statements, 2005

Financial Issues

A key financial issue for NCRCDD is that its revenue stream is primarily dependent on grants. The dependency on grants to fund its service operations requires extensive work by NCRCDD to continually apply and maintain due to increasing competition. This also makes NCRCDD financially reliant on a revenue stream that is subject to fluctuations. Other revenue streams include property tax based assessments that increase slowly and may be subject to budget cuts.



IV. ANNUAL PROJECTS AND LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

NCRCDD provides a service-oriented function within the community that emphasizes public education and information. As such, NCRCDD does not have the typical infrastructure associated with other special districts.

NCRCDD Conservation and Research Projects

NCRCDD provides individual services to landowners primarily in conjunction with NRCS as well as other organizations. Special demonstration projects, applied conservation research, and general community outreach are used to introduce emerging conservation technologies to landowners and community leaders. NCRCDD prepares an Annual Plan to identify and promote the services and education programs identified as being in line with their Long Range Plan and with the public's need. The 2005-06 Annual Plan is organized by goals as well as the focus areas that follow:

Goal 1: Promotion of Land Stewardship and Sustainable Agriculture

- A. Identify and promote sustainable farming and other land management practices through newsletters, workshops and the website.
- B. Support the NSWG and its program workshops and outreach.
- C. Coordinate and facilitate watershed stewardship planning workshop(s) for Napa Valley residents.
- D. Coordinate and facilitate a cooperative education workshop(s) to provide appropriate conservation information to urban and rural resident landowners.
- E. Pursue efforts to draw in new volunteers through the stewardship groups, schools, and community at large.

Goal 2: Restoration and Protection of Waterways and Water Quality

- A. Expand the local system of measurement of rainfall and tributary flows and develop accurate estimates of runoff based on hydrologic modeling.
- B. Carry out scientific studies of water and sediment dynamics in channels and floodplains.
- C. Track hydrologic changes within the Napa River watershed and assist Napa County in flood and land use planning.

Goal 3: Reduction of Soil Erosion

- A. Provide technical assistance to Napa County through the Conservation Regulations Joint Powers Agreement.
- B. Coordinate and facilitate cooperative erosion control technical workshop(s) in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, UC Cooperative Extension, trade organizations and other interested agencies and groups.
- C. Coordinate the preservation and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat through in-stream, riparian, and upland restoration activities.



Goal 4: Preservation and Restoration of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

- A. Coordinate volunteer monitoring program and monitor habitat and water quality.

Public Outreach and Education

Public outreach and education are achieved through an annual plan and long range plan that prioritize public outreach and educational needs. The following are the 2005-2006 public outreach and education programs:

- County of Napa Joint Powers Agreement (Conservation Regulations Watershed Educational Workshops)
- Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District: NPDES Storm Water Education Effort
- Department of Fish and Game: Central Watershed, Organizational Support for Dry Creek, Rector Creek, Sulphur Creek and Carneros Creek Watersheds, RDRT, Heath Canyon
- Department of Conservation: Watershed Coordinator Grant
- EPA: Wetlands Monitoring
- State Coastal Conservancy: Rutherford Dust Society – Napa River Restoration
- City of Napa: Napa River and tributaries Hydrology
- Napa Sustainable Winegrape Growing Group
- RWQCB: Sediment and Stewardship Grant, SEP Grant
- SWRCB: Green Certification Implementation
- Huichica Creek Vineyard

NCRCDD adheres to a public education program consisting of newsletters, website, participation in demonstrations, tours and education programs, presentations to schools and community groups, develops educational fact sheets, and other educational activities. In addition, NCRCDD pursues interest from local news media and invites media representatives to workshops and events.

Public Accountability

NCRCDD maintains a website <http://www.naparcd.org/> as a resource for a broad range of service information. Board meetings are conducted on the second Thursday of each month at the NCRCDD office and are open to the public. NCRCDD provides an annual summary of past and projected projects for each annual year in accordance to their long-term plan.

